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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

# PERSONAL NARRATIVES

OF THE

# BATTLES OF THE REBELLION

## No. 10.

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THE

# BATTLE OF THE MINE.

BY

ERVIN T. CASE.

# PERSONAL NARRATIVES

OF THE

# BATTLES OF THE REBELLION,

BEING

PAPERS READ BEFORE THE

## RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS

HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

No. 10.

*"Quaeque ipse miserrima vidi,*
*Et quorum pars magna fui."*

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1879.

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# BATTLE OF THE MINE.

BY

ERVIN T. CASE,

(Late Captain Ninth New Hampshire Volunteers.)

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# BATTLE OF THE MINE.

[Read before the Society, February 9th, 1876.]

I HAVE selected as the subject for a half hour's discourse, and, I trust, entertainment and profit, the "Battle of the Mine," or as it is sometimes called, the battle of "Cemetery Hill," or the "Crater," which was fought in front of Petersburg, Virginia, July thirtieth, 1864, and formed one of the series of engagements and seige operations around Richmond and Petersburg, by which General Grant fastened and tightened his grasp upon the throat of the rebel confederacy, which resulted in the capture of those cities and terminated at last under the apple tree at Appomattox.

This engagement, it is true, will never occupy a prominent place in the large catalogue of the battles of the war of the rebellion, either from its magni-

tude, for it was fought on a very limited extent of territory and between comparatively a small number of troops, (there being at no time over fifteen thousand men actively engaged upon either side,) or for its results, for these consisted mainly in a heavy loss to the union army of brave men, and in bickerings and estrangement between officers high in rank and command, that betokened and ended in no good to our cause, and without any compensatory injury to the enemy. It was not a turning point in a campaign, like Antietam and Gettysburg, and thus rendered memorable. It was not a victory for us or even a drawn battle, but a miserable failure.

I have chosen it as my theme for other reasons than these. First, because I deemed it might not be wholly uninteresting to a Rhode Island audience from the fact that it was planned by, and fought under the command of one whom Rhode Island is proud to claim and to honor, and closed, so far as the war of the rebellion was concerned, a military career always honorable, generally successful and brilliant, and which will derive new lustre in the light of future history, when the rubbish of calumny

and jealousy shall have been cleared away, and the true value of the military service, as well as the true nobility of character and exalted patriotism of General Burnside, shall be fully appreciated and render his name everywhere, as it is now where his services are best known, a household word. Secondly, because the published statements and criticisms of this engagement are so strongly conflicting and contradictory, and, in many instances, so grossly inaccurate and unjust, that having participated in the action, and in a position such that I can say of it in the language of another, "All of which I saw, a part of which I was," I have ever been desirous to place upon record, so far as I might in my humble capacity, a true account of what passed under my own observation at the time, as I recall them in memory to-day; without assuming, however, the part of a military critic in regard to it, but with the sole desire of stating as correctly as possible, the facts as I saw them. And, thirdly, for the reason that though not a great battle, it was one of the most desperate of the war, and affords some of the most striking instances of personal daring and self-sacrifice that

occurred during the whole four years of conflict, replete throughout with instances of daring and devotion equal to any upon the pages of history. And it is my purpose to deal quite as much with these incidents of the battle, as with that portion of it which is already a matter of history.

The operations of the Army of the Potomac which preceded the "Battle of the Mine," during that memorable campaign of the spring and summer of 1864, are matters of history, and so familiar to you all that I need but refer to them briefly in passing. General Grant having been appointed to the command of the armies of the United States in March, 1864, had assumed the personal direction of the Army of the Potomac, and after reorganizing and reënforcing it, had crossed the Rapidan on the fifth day of May, with the declaration that he "intended to fight it out on that line, if it took all summer," and by a series of flank movements, arrived in front of Petersburg on the sixteenth of June, having fought during the five weeks, the battles of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, North Anna, Tolopotomy, Bethesda Church, and Cold Harbor, among the

fiercest and most sanguinary of the war. Although the army had become greatly reduced and worn out by incessant marching and fighting, an attack was at once ordered. After three days fighting, in which the enemy had been pushed back to within about a mile of the city of Petersburg, and into a line of earthworks from which it was found impossible to dislodge him by direct assault, General Grant abandoned the idea of the immediate capture of Petersburg and Richmond, and began at once to draw his lines of investment around the doomed cities, and the siege commenced. Petersburg, then a city of eighteen thousand inhabitants, is situated on the Appomattox river, twenty-three miles south of Richmond, and the two cities were so situated and connected that the fall of one almost necessarily involved the capture of the other. General Grant had determined to make Petersburg the principal point of attack, at the same time operating against Richmond on the north side of the James river. The position of the two lines in front of Petersburg at the time of the "Battle of the Mine," I will speak of as briefly as possible, although I can give you but

a faint idea, either of the natural situation of the field or of the works that covered it.

The Appomattox river runs nearly east past the city which is on its south side. About a mile and a half east or below the city, on the river, commenced the rebel line of works of which I shall speak, and which extended south, bearing a little to the west for about three miles. This line, of course, was not straight but was constructed so as to form all possible angles and to make available all the natural advantages of the position. Our first line was nearly parallel with this, and at some points not more than an hundred yards distant from it. Our second or main line, was half or three-fourths of a mile to the rear, and on higher ground, where several forts or earthworks had been constructed, which contained at the time of the battle, several seige guns, besides the regular field artillery of the army. At the point where the "Battle of the Mine" was fought there was a deep ravine between our first and second line, our front line being but a few yards from the crest of the ravine. This ravine or hollow, which at some places was quite wide, was comparatively protected

from the enemy's fire, but the slope between that and our rear line, was swept by the enemy's fire, both of artillery and musketry, so that troops going to the front line, were obliged to go under cover of the darkness of night, and even then, the loss was so great that a covered way was constructed by which they could go in safety. A little southeast of the city, about a mile from the river and about the same distance from the city, the rebels had constructed a fort in their front line and placed in it six pieces of artillery. This fort was only about four hundred feet from our front line. In fact, the lines were so near together that "Yank" and "Johnny" held many familiar chats with each other across the intervening space. The Ninth Corps, by which the "Battle of the Mine" was principally fought upon our side, occupied the lines directly in front of this fort. At the risk of wearying your patience with these dry details, I must ask you to keep in mind the situation as I have attempted to describe it, in order better to understand the description of the battle.

The Ninth Corps at this time consisted of four

divisions, the first, second and third being white troops and largely from New England, and the fourth composed of colored troops who, up to this time, had never been under fire, while the three white divisions had participated in every battle of the campaign and had become terribly reduced in numbers. For six weeks there had not been a day of rest, scarcely an hour of quiet. Morning, noon and midnight, the booming of their cannon and the rattling of their musketry echoed unceasingly through the Wilderness, around the hills of Spottsylvania, along the banks of the North Anna, and among the groves of Bethesda Church and Cold Harbor, and their ranks had again been decimated in front of Petersburg, in securing the position they now held, so that these divisions which crossed the Rapidan on the fifth of May twenty thousand strong, now numbered but about eight thousand effective men. I cannot give you the exact figures, but will give you the loss of my own regiment up to this time as an illustration of what the corps had suffered. We took into the first battle four hundred men, and in forty-two days our loss in killed and wounded, had been

upwards of three hundred and twenty-five, forty-two of whom were laid side by side in one grave beneath the trees of Spottsylvania. But notwithstanding these losses and hardships, such was their confidence in their true-hearted General Burnside, and such their devotion to the cause in which they were engaged, that they were ready and willing for any duty they might be called upon to perform. For reasons which will be stated hereafter, General Burnside decided to keep the fourth or colored division, in reserve, and thus all the arduous duty in the trenches fell upon the other three divisions; and more severe duty can hardly be imagined, for each alternate forty-eight hours was spent behind the front line of breastworks in the sand, without shelter and exposed to the enemy's fire unless we lay low, and the remainder of the time we were in the second line, where we were still exposed to the enemy's fire, and not a day passed without more or less loss in killed and wounded. Such was the condition of the corps when it went into position in front of Petersburg, and such its duty there for the six weeks previous to the battle.

Soon after our occupation of these lines, it occurred to the practical eye of an officer of the corps, Lieutenant-Colonel Pleasants, of the Forty-eighth Pennsylvania Regiment, that this fort which I have mentioned, could be mined and blown up by an explosion of gunpowder beneath it. Colonel Pleasants was a practical mining engineer before the war, and immediately taking his observations, he submitted his plan to General Burnside, who approved it, and he submitted it to General Meade, commanding the Army of the Potomac, who disapproved it. Permission or rather sufferance, however, was obtained from army head-quarters for the construction of the mine, and on the twenty-fifth day of June, Colonel Pleasants with his regiment, who were mostly miners, commenced the work. The mine commenced in the ravine of which I have spoken, and five hundred feet distant from the fort. It was apparent from the first, that no aid or encouragement would be received from General Meade. No instruments or tools could be obtained, and as the work progressed, the men were obliged to bring out every foot of earth excavated, by hand in hard-tack boxes,

as no wheelbarrows could be obtained. But with all these disadvantages, such was the energy and perseverance of Colonel Pleasants and his men, that in thirty days from the time they stuck the first spade into the earth, they had excavated a hole four feet wide, four and a half feet high, and five hundred and twenty feet long, extending under the doomed fort, and had constructed a chamber eighty feet long, in which were placed eight thousand pounds of powder. General Grant, who had not abandoned the idea that Petersburg might yet be carried by assault, determined to take advantage of the opportunity that would be afforded by the explosion of this mine to carry out his purpose, and therefore readily acceded to General Burnside's request, made soon after the work of constructing the mine commenced, to storm the enemy's works with the Ninth Corps, supported by other corps, in connection with the explosion of the mine. General Burnside at once laid his plans for the attack. The colored division was selected by him to lead the charge, and accordingly they were kept in reserve and in constant drill for such movements and service as would be required of them in

the attack, while the other divisions, which were to support the Fourth, were kept in constant service in the trenches. The mine was charged on the twenty-seventh of July, and on the twenty-eighth a demonstration was made in front of Richmond, to draw the enemy's attention.

The morning of the thirtieth, which had been fixed for the attack, was rapidly approaching, and General Burnside had completed his arrangements for it, and only waited for the moment to arrive which he had all confidence would place our army in possession of Petersburg and destroy Lee's army. On the afternoon of the twenty-ninth, while he was thus anxiously waiting, he was summoned to General Meade's head-quarters and informed that his plan was disapproved, and that the three divisions of white troops must make the attack and the fourth division act as a support. I shall not attempt to criticise this interference, but am content that the future shall base its judgment of it upon the testimony of General Grant before the "Committee on the Conduct of the War," in which he says: "General Burnside wanted to put his colored division in front, and I believe if

he had done so, it would have been a success, still I agreed with General Meade in his objection to that plan." The result of this change was to leave the colored division with its full ranks, about seven thousand men, who had been specially drilled for the duty, as a support, and put in the other three divissions, worn out and reduced to about the same strength numerically as the single colored division. But General Burnside had no alternative than to adopt the plan of General Meade, and he changed his orders accordingly.

Such was the situation as the night of the twenty-ninth of July closed in upon us. I remember standing in our rear line as the sun was sinking behind the hills beyond Petersburg, looking across the fields which on the morrow were to behold such carnage. Along the eminence where I stood, was a line of breastworks connecting a chain of forts, the guns in every one of which, more than a hundred in all, were already shotted and carefully trained upon the point of attack. From where I stood, the ground sloped gradually to the ravine of which I have spoken, through which in our front ran the bed of

the Weldon Railroad. Just across this ravine I could see our front line of breastworks, heavily built with traverses to protect the men who wearily stood guard behind it. A few hundred feet beyond frowned the fort, garrisoned by several hundred men, thirty feet beneath whom lay the four tons of powder waiting for the match. Between these lines, was a smooth plain or rather a gentle slope, rising towards the rebel lines, across which on the morrow we were to charge. Beyond the rebel line the ground still rose for half a mile, forming a crest upon which was a cemetery, giving it the name of "Cemetery Hill." This hill was to be the objective point of our attack, for it crowned the city, which was upon the farther slope leading down to the river, and whose tall spires cast their lengthened shadows in the light of the setting sun. I shall never forget till my dying day the scene or the thoughts that passed through my mind, as I stood there on that summer eve.

All the plans, of course, for the battle had been kept a profound secret except at the several army and corps headquarters, until late in the afternoon

it began to be whispered among the officers of the Ninth Corps, almost under their breath, that an important movement was about to be made, and of course all knew almost instinctively that the mine was about to be sprung and that it was to be followed by a grand attack upon the enemy's line of works. The information was conveyed to the officers of the regiment to which I belonged by the commanding officer as we gathered at his quarters, as was our wont, after dress parade, for we occasionally had dress parade when not on the front line. After passing a few moments with us pleasantly in social converse, he suddenly remarked, and I can remember as if it were but yesterday, the expression on his countenance and the tone of his voice, "Gentlemen, when you gather here to-morrow night, some of us will not be present; probably we shall never all meet here again," and then he gave us the plans of the battle so far as they had been communicated to him. But oh! how sadly true were his words. Of the dozen officers then present, on the morrow night five gathered in that lonely tent, but its occupant of the previous night was never more to meet

ús there, having been one of the first to fall, severely wounded, as we crossed the enemy's line.

At one o'clock in the morning, the troops of the Ninth Corps were ordered into line and began to pass through the covered way to the ravine and into the position assigned them. The troops had all been withdrawn from the front line of works, they being too near the fort for safety at the time of the explosion, and massed just at the farther edge of the ravine and a little in rear of the breastworks; the second division, General Potter, on the right, the first, General Ledlie, in the centre, and the third, General Wilcox, on the left. The orders of General Burnside were that immediately upon the explosion, General Ledlie's division was to advance directly on the demolished fort, while General Potter was to move down the enemy's works to the right and General Wilcox on the left, while the sole idea pervading the whole of General Meade's orders and dispatches before and during the engagement, were to the effect that the troops were to be pushed forward at once to the crest of "Cemetery Hill." What he expected to accomplish by this movement,

without first driving the enemy from his front line to the right and left of the small break to be made by the explosion and subsequent passage of troops through the opening, requires a greater knowledge of military movements than I possess, to divine. Certain it is, and it would seem that it would have been apparent to any ordinary military mind, that every man that passed beyond the first line of the enemy's works through this expected opening, would be captured unless the line to the right and left could be forced to retire.

It fell to the lot of the regiment to which I belonged, to lead the column of General Potter's division, which was massed in column of regiments, and to occupy a position directly in front of the mine and the rebel fort, and nearer to it than any other troops. We were formed in a grove of trees upon the edge of the ravine, which grove was ordered, by General Burnside, at the solicitation of Colonel Monroe, (J. Albert,) Chief of Artillery of the Ninth Corps, to be cut down instantly upon the explosion, in order to give a better view of the enemy's line, and a detail of negroes from the fourth division

had been made for this purpose, and were standing at their allotted posts, axe in hand, to do the work assigned them; and here let me pay a tribute to the manner in which that duty was performed, for no sooner had the explosion occurred, than every man sprung to his place, two being assigned to the large and one to the smaller trees, and not a man left his post till every tree had fallen, though many of them fell at their posts, and in several instances where two were assigned the same tree, and one had fallen, the other remained till the work was done. Was there greater bravery displayed in the excitement and heat of the battle than this, although it was exhibited by men of sable hue, but of true and noble heart and nerve?

At three o'clock every regiment of the corps was in position, waiting for the explosion, which was to take place at half past three. Then came that terrible hour before the battle, which no one can understand or appreciate except those who have experienced it,—when every man is conscious that he is standing face to face with death, and knows that in a few moments many of his comrades true and tried

will sleep the sleep that knows no waking, it may be himself among the number. What thoughts of the past come thronging in his mind, what dread uncertainties of the future, what recollections of home and loved ones, of wife and children, of father, mother, and dear ones! I remember while thus waiting on this morning, noticing an officer of my regiment, one of the bravest of the brave, whom I had known from childhood, standing aloof from the rest, leaning upon his sword, the tears trickling down his cheek. Guessing the cause, I stepped up to him and placing my hand on his shoulder, said, trying to rally him: "Never mind, Lieutenant, you and I have been through many battles together, and always came out all right and I guess we will this time." I can never forget his look as he replied, "Captain, it ain't myself I am thinking of, for I can meet death like a man, but its my wife and four little children at home." These were the thoughts that passed through many a mind as we stood waiting the word of command.

At quarter past three o'clock the fuse attached to the powder in the mine was lighted. Anxiously we

waited, but no explosion followed. Half an hour passed, but all was silent as the grave—scarcely a whisper among the men. The only sound was the early song of the birds in the trees and shrubs. The moments were passing—officers and men growing impatient. At length it became certain that the fuse had gone out, and the question was, what shall be done? A lieutenant and sergeant of the Forty-eighth Pennsylvania, one of them a Rhode Island man, volunteered to go in and ascertain the cause. Cautiously examining the fuse, they find where it had gone out. Cutting it and preparing to ignite it, the lieutenant computes the time it will take it to burn and the distance he has to go to escape the effect of the explosion. He sees that he has scarcely a chance of escape. His match is lighted, he looks at his watch and sees that it is half past four o'clock and knows that the mine must explode immediately or the whole plan is a failure. Calmly choosing the almost certain death to the failure of the project, he applies the match and as if to verify the old adage, "Fortune favors the brave," escapes unhurt.

Meanwhile General Meade, a mile to the rear,

comfortably bestowed in his quarters, becoming impatient at the delay, and ignorant of its cause, grows irritable, and at length, at half past four, orders the charge to be made without regard to the explosion. Fortunately his order was not received till the explosion took place. At twenty minutes to five, I was standing with my watch in hand and noting the time, I remarked, "I guess the game's up for to-day," when all of a sudden the earth beneath my feet heaved as with the force of an earthquake, and the rebel fort in our front rose some five hundred feet in the air, with a heavy report as of distant thunder. Then followed a scene which beggars all description and of which language must fail to convey the faintest idea. In an instant a fort of six guns, with caissons, limbers and all their equipments, and a garrison of five hundred men, were blown into the air and fell in shapeless masses in every direction for hundreds of yards, and where but a moment before stood the fort with its garrison sleeping in almost perfect security, was a hole or crater two hundred feet long, sixty feet wide and twenty-five feet deep. Probably not a man of all that garrison escaped. At the instant

that we felt the jar of the explosion, the order, "FORWARD!" was shouted. A hundred pieces of artillery in our rear belched forth their thunders, while the shot and shell from them went screeching past us and just over our heads. And here let me pause a moment to pay a just tribute to the officer in command of those guns, and whom I notice before me to-night. For I cannot refrain from saying even in his presence, that had every part of the plan of the battle been executed as faithfully, as promptly, and as efficiently, as that assigned to Colonel Monroe, Chief of Artillery of the Ninth Corps, the issue of the battle must have been far different from what it was. The crash of artillery, mingling with the thunders of the explosion, the roar of musketry, the hoarse shouts of command, the cheers of the troops as they swept forward to the charge, their bayonets glistening in the rays of the rising sun, with the shrieks and groans of the wounded and dying, combined to make a scene such as Milton in his description of the fierce combat on the battlements of heaven, when the apostate angels were cast thence, but faintly portrays, and which no one who witnessed it can ever forget.

It had been intended that General Ledlie's division should charge first, but General Griffin, who had formed his brigade—the first of General Potter's division—directly in front of the fort, having been called away just at the moment of the explosion, Colonel White, who had instructions from General Griffin to take the brigade in in case the explosion occurred before his return, not being familiar with the details of the plan, gave the order "FORWARD!" as soon as he felt the explosion, and so it happened that we were the first to enter the crater made by the explosion, the colors of my regiment being the first planted on the ruins of the fort, almost before the dirt had ceased falling. Regiment after regiment followed us, but the enemy, at first panic stricken, quickly rallied and begun at once to pour in upon us a terrific fire, both of artillery and infantry, to avoid which the later regiments, instead of passing directly over the works at this point, as was intended, piled into the crater after us. Quickly rallying, we passed beyond the crater, and sweeping down the works to the right and left, carried them for some two hundred yards in either direction, and

then forward and attempted to pass on to the crest of Cemetery Hill, as directed in General Meade's orders, but the different regiments had already suffered terribly in the charge. The whole of the three white divisions had been sent in, no support came to our relief, and, slowly and sadly disputing every inch of ground, we were forced back towards the crater. Time was passing but it brought us no relief until about nine o'clock, when the Fourth Division came in with all the impetuosity of new troops, cheering wildly, and for a moment it seemed as though the tide of battle would turn, and, if supported, we would carry the hill. But our hope was short lived, for though we rallied again and again, each time we were forced back at the point of the bayonet, towards the crater and finally into it. I never saw men fight better than the colored division, but they came too late to avail us.

I saw instances of individual bravery there that were never excelled upon any field. I noticed in particular the intrepidity of one private soldier, to whom God had given a dark skin but a brave heart and purpose, as well as a powerful physique. While

the enemy were forcing us back he came to the front, and calmly loading his rifle, waited till the enemy rallied to another charge upon us and until within a few feet of us, when, deliberately stepping over the breastworks that separated us, he shot the foremost rebel, then clubbing his musket he dispatched the two next with its butt, and breaking it at the second blow, with a look of disgust he threw it away and came back amid a shower of bullets, unharmed.

But all this bravery could avail nothing, for the enemy had had time to send reinforcements to the threatened line and the day was lost. Upon our return to the crater, a fearful sight met us. It had become nearly filled with the wounded, the dead and the dying, to such an extent that many were trampled to death who were otherwise unharmed. Vainly we attempted to hold the crater till night fall, so that we could escape under cover of the darkness. About two o'clock in the afternoon the enemy charged over into the crater and all that remained were taken prisoners. While in the crater occurred another instance of daring and self-forgetfulness, which I witnessed, and which is described by General Griffin, whose words I quote :

"On another occasion, at the battle of the Mine, when it was found impossible to succeed in the attempt to break the rebel line, our troops who held the crater were ordered by General Grant to retreat. Shot and shell and musket balls rained down upon those troops with fearful destructiveness. The enemy also had a cross fire on the open field over which they must retreat back to our lines, and could bring so many guns to bear upon that point as to make it almost sure death to any one who should attempt to pass over that ground. The day was exceedingly hot Our poor boys were lying there in the burning sand upon which a July sun was shining with all the power of its vertical rays. Many of the wounded had crawled in there to avoid the shot, only to be exposed to the terrible bombs which fell in scores and exploded among them, often tearing them to pieces in the most horrible manner. All were suffering agonies of thirst, and the wounded were absolutely dying for the want of water. While lying there in that condition, waiting for our artillery to open and draw the enemy's fire so that the wounded might be saved and the retreat made with greater safety and with less loss, soldiers would come to their commanding officers and ask leave to go to the rear for water—to pass through that terrific shower of bullets and cannon shot and bring back water for the poor suffering boys around them. The reply would be, 'Yes, take as many canteens as you can well carry and go, and bring us water'—given more with the hope of saving *that soldier* from being captured where he was, and giving him a chance to run for his life, than with any expectation of seeing him return; for the probability at that time was that nearly all would be either captured or

killed, and it was thought too much to expect of any soldier that he would voluntarily pass twice through almost certain death--after having once escaped. Soldier after soldier came with the same request and was answered in the same manner, and quickly gathering up his load of canteens, started on his perilous journey—some to pass safely over and some to fall by the way. In due time one of them was seen clambering over our lines below, loaded down with well-filled canteens of cool water. What shouts and hurrahs from those parched throats greeted the brave fellow as he dashed toward us through the leaden hail. What blessings he received as he came among us and distributed the priceless beverage to those wounded men dying of thirst. Presently another of those heroes comes over the parapet with his burden of canteens. He, too, starts to join us with all the speed of which he is capable, but ere he has passed half way across that deadly field, he throws up his arms and goes down with the unmistakable *thud* of death. Quick as thought a young soldier dashes out from among us, rushes across the field, and seizing the canteens from the body of the fallen man, starts back to join us, but is shot down ere he has made a dozen yards. But see! He is up again, with indomitable pluck, and comes in with his precious freight only slightly wounded. And the shouts rise louder than ever for his gallant exploit. Then another comes over the parapet and succeeds in reaching us. Another attempts it and falls. And so on, until I believe every one of those noble fellows returned with his gallons of water, or fell in the attempt. It was to me the most striking exhibition of heroism and true courage that I saw during the whole war."

As we were forced to yield the crater, about a dozen of us climbed over the edge and took refuge in the angle formed by the upheaved earth and the breastworks, where we remained for an hour, the enemy upon one side and we upon the other, neither side daring to raise their heads. Among the number were General Griffin, of New Hampshire, General Hartranft, (now Governor of Pennsylvania,) and General Bartlett, of Massachusetts. The latter had attracted my attention particularly in the charge, as he had lost a leg at Bull Run and now led his men into the fight on a cork leg, carrying no sword or equipments, but simply a rattan walking stick, and was conspicuous in the front of the charge. Deliberately we discussed the choice between remaining and being taken prisoners, or almost certain death in retreat. Choosing the latter, we all started at once except General Bartlett, who could not run, and a few of us escaped but more fell by the way.

Thus ended in failure what promised to be one of the most successful battles of the war, and which must ever be ranked among the lost opportunities of the struggle. I have not time had I the wish, to

discuss the question of who was to blame for the failure or what were its causes. The great defect was in the lack of support, which was at hand in abundance had General Meade seen fit to have allowed it to be used. Certain it is that the failure should not be attributed to General Burnside, for no one could have accomplished more with the troops at his disposal. The loss in the Ninth Corps, was over four thousand, more than a fourth of its whole number, showing with what desperation they fought. General Meade, ever jealous of General Burnside, and incapable of appreciating his nobility of character, cast upon him all the responsibility of the failure, and the result was his retirement from the command of the Ninth Corps and from active service. But when true merit and meritorious service, though from modesty unclaimed, is fully appreciated, the name of Burnside will stand far above that of many of those who from motives of jealousy and meanness defamed him.

Permit me, though not pertinent to this paper, to state a fact I think generally unknown in regard to General Sherman's March to the Sea, and for which

he has received and is entitled to such meeds of praise, and that is, that the first man to suggest and plan that march was General Burnside. After the capture of Knoxville by General Burnside in 1873, he sent to General Halleck a dispatch, submitting three plans for his future movements, the last of which was;—I quote the official record:—

"To move on the south side of the Tennessee, through Athens, Columbus and Benton, past the right flank of the enemy, sending a body of cavalry along the railroad on its west side to threaten the enemy's flank and cover the movements of the main body, which, consisting of seven thousand infantry and five thousand cavalry, will move rapidly down the line of the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad, to Dalton, destroying the enemy's communications, sending a cavalry force to Rome to destroy the machine works and powder mills at that place, the main body moving rapidly on the direct road to Atlanta, the railroad centre, and there entirely destroying the enemy's communications, breaking up the depots, etc., thence moving to some point on the coast, where cover can be obtained, as shall be agreed upon with you. It is proposed to take no trains but to live upon the supplies at the enemy's depots, destroying such as we do not use. If followed by the enemy, as we undoubtedly shall be, Rosencrans will be relieved and enabled to advance, and from the celerity of our movements and the destruction of bridges, etc., in our rear, the chance of escaping material injury

from pursuit are in our favor. Our chief loss would probably be in stragglers. I am in favor of the last plan."

To the above dispatch General Halleck replied under date of October second :—

"The purport of all your instructions has been that you should hold your point near the upper end of the valley and with all your available force move to the assistance of Rosencrans. Since the battle of Chicamauga and the reduction of our force to paper, you have been repeatedly told that it would be dangerous to form a connection on the south side of the Tennessee river and consequently that you ought to march on the north side. Rosencrans has now telegraphed to you that it is not necessary to join him at Chattanooga, but only to move to such a position that you can go to his assistance should he require it. You are in direct communication with Rosencrans and can learn his condition and wants sooner than I can. Distant expeditions into Georgia are not now contemplated. The object is to hold East Tennessee by forcing the enemy south of the mountains and closing the passes against his return."

After we were drawn back to our old line we were forcibly reminded of the cruelties of war, and our enemy's hate, by the following circumstances. We had left upon the slope between the lines a large number of dead and wounded. A flag of truce was immediately sent out requesting permis-

sion to bring off the wounded and to bury our dead, which was refused; and for two days the wounded lay exposed to the intense heat of the mid-summer sun without food or water, as targets for rebel bullets, and no opportunity to shoot one of the wounded was allowed to pass unimproved. Even those who were able to move and had crawled close up to the rebel line of works, were driven out by tossing among them bunches of cartridges with a slow match attached, that they might more easily become victims of rebel hate. When the permission was finally granted two days after the battle, we buried the dead but found only about a dozen wounded living upon the field.

Is it strange that we who witnessed scenes like these should be slow to forget them, and while we cherish no revenge, should demand that those who attempted to destroy the government, and practiced these barbarities on the field, and starved our soldiers in prison pens, should show works meet for repentance before we again commit to their hands the control of the government. Is it strange either that we should cherish with a love that will never forget,

those who, living or dead to day, stood side by side with us amid scenes like these; or that we cherish with a love amounting almost to reverence, the land drenched with and saved by such precious blood; or shall say of it to-night—

Oh! Beautiful! My Country! ours once more!
Smoothing thy gold of war-dishevelled hair
O'er such sweet brows as never others wore,
And letting thy set lips,
Freed from wrath's pale eclipse,
The rosy edges of their smile lay bare,
What words divine of lover or of poet,
Could tell our love and make thee know it?
Among the Nations bright beyond compare!
What were our lives without thee?
What all our lives to save thee?
We reck not what we gave thee,
We will not dare to doubt thee,
But ask whatever else, and we will dare!

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